

254 PONSONBY ROAD

## THE PONSONBY PAVILION

### Introduction

This proposal is a collage of ideas. We have taken existing buildings/landscape/art concepts and used them directly to create our plan for this public place. The buildings/landscape/art features taken by us fit into this environment. They create cultural connections that are international as well as local, and form a dialogue between the future and the past.

Our plagiarism is a deliberate design choice; a direct referencing in order to make those connections and to comment on the history of Aotearoa in the world, and on Ponsonby today.

### Overall Description of the Proposal

The core component of the design is:

- A copy of the Barcelona Pavilion (the German Pavilion: Barcelona International Exhibition 1929 designed by Mies van der Rohe)

Used here at the corner of Ponsonby Road, as 'the Ponsonby Pavilion'.

Within the hidden courtyard of the building we have placed:

- Pania on the Reef, a copy of the statue commissioned by the Thirty Thousand Club of Napier, sculpted by unknown artists at Carrara, Italy 1954.<sup>1</sup>

The pavilion fills most of the site forming an open square to O'Neil St and a walled garden to Ponsonby Road. The overall size of the pavilion leaves a side courtyard from Ponsonby Road. This is a garden with ramps, a courtyard, and a bus-stop copied from:

- Video Bus-stop by Rem Koolhaas, 1991, a small building that heavily references the Barcelona Pavilion

Within the courtyard, behind the pavilion is a service building that provides toilet facilities and storage for furniture for events. This structure is directly copied from the forms of the Barcelona Pavilion.

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<sup>1</sup> National Library: Te Ao Hou Journal, [teahou.natlib.govt.nz/journals/teahou/issue/Mao10TeA/c21.html](http://teahou.natlib.govt.nz/journals/teahou/issue/Mao10TeA/c21.html)

This leaves the area of the back of the site. We have looked at this area two ways; as a recreational play space, or as a folly, a garden of ruins, a place of contemplation.

The play space is directly borrowed from:

- Pigalle Duperre Basketball Court Basketball Court: Ill Studio, 9<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement Paris, 2014

The folly alternative, draws on two art historical references and on the history of the site and the area:

- House, a 1993 work created by Turner Prize winning artist Rachel Whiteread, at 193 Grove Road, Mile End London, in 1993
- The etchings of Giovanni Batista Piranesi (1720-1778)

### Street Treatment

We have extended the site into the street, using the street as shared space down the length of the site. The surface finishes of the site are used across the roadway to 'capture' the road as part of the site and to include them as functioning space.

## The Elements

### The Pavilion

The Barcelona Pavilion represents the very early high point of conceptual modernism. Mies van der Rohe designed the building as an exercise in pure space formed by simple planes of beautiful materials, 'an ideal zone of tranquility'. It was a transitory building constructed for the German government as their pavilion at the Barcelona International exhibition of 1929. Following the exhibition the building was dismantled and became an idea.

The idea of pure space and no function inherent in this structure has inflamed the architectural world ever since. This building transformed thinking about space and architecture and remains a key reference for high end modern architecture.

The pavilion was reconstructed on its original site by the Mies van der Rohe Foundation of Barcelona in 1986. The project, led by the Barcelona City Council, was carried out by architects Ignasi de Sola-Morales, Cristian Cirici and Fernando Ramos. It is a place of tranquility and great beauty, a shrine to space and nothingness.

The foundation have used the pavilion as: a place to be visited, a place for contemplation, a place to host functions, and as a place that is used to inspire art projects. In the most extreme of these the artist Ai Wei Wei filled the pool with milk, leaving it for several months to form beautiful and malodorous moulds. We envisage a program of commissioned events for the Ponsonby Pavilion that would similarly enhance the stature of this place.

This building fits perfectly in the Ponsonby Road context. It provides, relaxing open space, and connects to a rich narrative of ideas. It is flexible. It can accommodate a range of functions. It provides shelter. It provides simplicity, peace and calm.

### Pania on the Reef

In the original pavilion Mies chose a neo-classical sculpture by Georg Kolbe, entitled Dawn, to grace the pool of the hidden courtyard. We have replaced this with a bronze statue of Pania on the Reef. This statue is a copy of an artwork unveiled at Napier on June 10 1954 to honour the legend of Pania. The legend reinforces the connection between the people of the land and the sea, a trope of the New Zealand psyche.

The process that led to the creation of the statue was instigated by the Rt Rev. F. A. Bennett, Bishop of Aotearoa, with the support of the Thirty Thousand Club of Napier<sup>2</sup>. The statue is based on a photograph of a schoolgirl, Mei Irihapiti Robin, and was created by unknown artists at Carrara, Italy.<sup>3</sup>

The Pania statue has a similar grace and character to the Kolbe statue, and speaks not just of the Maori legend, but of the richly connected world of the 1950s. It was a co-

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<sup>2</sup> The Thirty Thousand Club of Napier was founded in 1912 by notable residents to promote Napier as the "Nice of the South" to encourage more people to choose to live in the town so that it had a population of 30,000 and hence qualified as a city.

<sup>3</sup> National Library: Te Ao Hou Journal, [teaohou.natlib.govt.nz/journals/teahou/issue/Mao10TeA/c21.html](http://teaohou.natlib.govt.nz/journals/teahou/issue/Mao10TeA/c21.html)

operative work made by Italians, for the people of New Zealand, to illustrate a Maori legend.

The pavilion and the statue together create a dialogue as the statue is the 'local' content within an 'international' idea of space. A bronze statue of Pania fits this setting and would provide a local counterpoint to the international character of this space, with an international story of its own.

#### Option A

##### The Basketball Court

The basketball court serves primarily as a play space for the local community – particularly the younger generations to enjoy the outdoors and get out of the digital world. The original Pigalle court design was inspired by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century painting “The Sportsmen”, by Russian painter Kazimir Malevich. The design firm Ill-Studio collaborated with French fashion brand Pigalle to create a court that is now a landmark in the Parisian 9<sup>th</sup> arrondissement. The arresting result is a giant art piece that kids can actively engage with and play on.

The basketball court also offers a flexible open space to be used for a multitude of uses such as weekend markets, carparking for functions, and community events.

#### Option B

##### Folly Garden: Concrete Houses and Ruined Chapel

The site was formerly the site of the All Saints Catholic Church. The Catholic Church community has contributed significantly to the culture of Ponsonby. The church has a considerable presence in the area: The Bishop's Palace in St Marys Bay, St Mary's College, St Pauls College, the Sacred Heart Church, St Colomba Centre and Seminary. This is a buried history on the site.

To honour this we have created a ruined contemplative garden at the back corner of the site, a reference to the long Catholic history of the area and to the former use of the site as a place of worship and quiet contemplation. Our concept for this is based on Piranesi's etchings of ruined Rome.

The ruined garden folly sits behind two concrete sculptured villa forms.

Ponsonby is defined by rows of nineteenth century houses. The houses create a harmonious and rich built environment. When first built the villa houses of the area were mainly occupied by tradesmen and their families, people who had come to New Zealand to be part of an egalitarian society. Ponsonby, once humble, and very tidy, declined through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and became a rental suburb, home in the 1960s and 1970s to the newly arrived Pacific communities of Auckland, mixed with student flats and the remnant older families.

We have taken Rachel Whiteread's concept of externalizing space and have placed two cast concrete villas as flagship remnants of the history of dwellings in the area.

The houses are only exteriors. Between the houses are passageways to the contemplative garden behind. The gardens are tangled ruins with epiphytes and luxuriant weeds.

The team

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